



The Planning Network

A Look at the Services We Provide

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The Planning and Building Department's Mission Statement:

Promoting the Wise Use of Land

Helping to Build Great Communities

In this edition of *The Planning Network* newsletter, we focus on the activities performed by the department and how they benefit you, the taxpayer. Much of what we do involves land use activities that can greatly influence the quality of life in our county and how our county looks. Also, some citizens may not be aware that many of the activities performed by the Planning and Building Department directly serve property owners. We hope this edition is both informative and useful to you.

The Planning and Building Department is organized into many separate sections that contribute some part in planning and governing our urban communities and rural areas. You may be familiar with some of these services, but you may not know about the others that are very beneficial. For instance, the Building Division provides a valuable consumer protection service by providing building inspection and plan check service to property owners interested in building a home or business on their land. Our Administrative Division found ways to save people time by enabling customers to pay some Building Permit fees using our website and a major credit card and has created other online services like inspection scheduling or online permit status look-up. These online features save the hassle of driving to San Luis Obispo, finding a place to park, and spending your otherwise valuable time coming to our office. The Code Enforcement section helps keep neighborhoods from becoming unsightly by responding to concerns and organizing community clean-ups in communities that may have a junk car problem. We invite you to read further and learn of other activities our department is engaged in. We hope you find this edition of our quarterly newsletter informative and useful and look forward to serving the needs of the community in the future.



We're on the web!
WWW.SLOPLANNING.ORG

Department Organization

Department Ops	Community Relations	Building	Current Planning	Environmental	Long Range
Accounting	Permit Center	Plan Review	Inland/Coastal	Mines & Geo	Community
Operations	Info Services	Inspections	Records Mgmt	Environmental	Housing & Economics
	Code Enforcement	Wastewater	Ag Preserve	Energy	GIS Program
	Tech Services				

BUILDING DIVISION

Why Do I Need a Building Permit?

By Cheryl Journey



Why do my plans need to be reviewed and my project inspected?

Building permits provide protection for the consumer and community when building or renovating occurs. Whether you're installing a hot tub, grading a driveway or building a new home, every construction plan is required by law to have a building permit.

A building permit ensures that a non-biased, well-trained, knowledgeable third party has reviewed and inspected your project for compliance with the most recent California building codes. Building codes secure health, fire safety, employee safety, energy conservation, and handicapped accessibility.

Here are just a few ways building permits can help you:

Solves problems before they happen and saves money!

Occasionally, a project may run into difficulties. Building permit plan reviews and inspections should catch these problems before they occur. The building permit process is one way to ensure that a project runs smoother and with fewer problems

during and after construction. Redoing a project because of errors can cost a lot of time and money. **DOING IT RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE WILL SAVE YOU MONEY IN THE LONG RUN!**

A non-biased building official can review the work of a contractor

Many owners have never built a home or renovated a property and don't know the ins and outs of construction so they hire a contractor. Because the owner may lack experience and knowledge, he or she is well served to have a non-biased review of the contractor's work. Plan checkers and inspectors are actually working on behalf of the owner. Although an inspector won't be on site daily or act as a General Contractor, he or she can review the various stages of the project when called to inspect. **THE CONSUMER NEEDS AN EXPERT TO REVIEW THE PROJECT.**

Inspectors can serve as a sounding board with vital knowledge of State Building Code standards

If a property owner is doing the work on a project, inspectors can be a great source of assistance and information when working through the construction process. The property owner can ask questions and meet with inspectors either on the phone or in the Planning and Building office. They can also tell you about some of the options allowed in the building code as they relate to your project.

Helps protect property value

Your home or business is an investment. If your construction project does not comply with the codes adopted by your community,

the value of your investment could be reduced.

Insurance coverage

Property insurers may not cover work or damages caused by work done without permits and inspections.

It's the law

County Ordinances require that all construction projects have permits. Construction work done without a permit may be subject to removal or other costly remedies.

Makes selling property easier

When property is sold through a multiple listing association, the owner is required to disclose any improvements or repairs made and if permits and inspections were obtained. Many financial institutions will not finance a purchase without proof of a final inspection. If you decide to sell a home or building that has had modifications without a permit, you may be required to tear down the addition, leave it unoccupied or make costly repairs.

Improves safety

Your permit allows the code official to reduce potential hazards of unsafe construction to provide for public health, safety and welfare. By following code guidelines, your completed project will meet minimum standards of safety and will be less likely to cause injury to you, your family, and your friends or future owners. Mandatory inspections complement the contractor's experience and act as a system of checks and balances resulting in a safer project.

CURRENT PLANNING

Development and the Decision-Making Process

By Warren Hoag

From single family homes in the Cambria pines to wineries in rural El Pomar, all development is approved or disapproved based on the San Luis Obispo County General Plan and its ordinances. The General Plan and ordinances were adopted by our County Board of Supervisors to provide a vision of where future development should occur and guide how it will look and function.

To make that vision a reality, the Current Planning Division works with developers, community groups and the general public. We review a wide variety of residential and commercial projects within the unincorporated areas of our county to ensure that adopted plans are followed and projects are a good fit with existing natural and built environments.

Our clients include not only the developers we guide through the permit process, but also local community groups, the general public and organized interest groups. Strong public involvement throughout the development review process is encouraged. This begins when we send project referrals to community advisory councils and continues until the project is considered at a public hearing held by the designated decision-making body. These hearing bodies include the Planning Commission, the Subdivision Review Board and the Planning Department Hearing Officer.

The Planning Commission makes decisions on more complex projects such as shopping centers and large residential developments and provides recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on proposed changes to our General Plan and ordinances.

The Subdivision Review Board makes decisions on requests to subdivide property into four or less parcels.

The Planning Department Hearing Officer makes decisions on minor land use projects such as small wineries and single family homes along the coast.

All decisions made by these bodies can be appealed to the Board of Supervisors for a final decision.

Our review, recommendations, and decision-making process are intended to result in development which respects the environment, achieves community goals and meets the needs of the citizens of our county.

ENVIRONMENTAL DIVISION

Considering the Environment

By John Nall

When my daughters were young and someone would ask them what their father does for a living, they would say that he makes sure the plants and animals still have homes after people build houses. I would smile and say, "That's right, but there's a lot more to it..."

What We Do

State law requires that certain types of development projects (including subdivisions) be reviewed in order to determine whether they might adversely affect the area where we live. This is called the environmental review process. The Environmental Division of the County Department of Planning and Building is responsible for all of the environmental review that is done for projects approved by the County.

Environmental review identifies potential effects that projects might have on things we care about like agriculture, biological resources, water quality and visual resources. Environmental review also identifies constraints that a project may encounter such as geologic hazards, sewage disposal problems or water availability.

How We Do It

The environmental review process is used to avoid or minimize impacts which could occur from a project. We do that by changing the project or requiring certain measures to compensate for or reduce impacts which could occur when a project is built. Information generated during the environmental review process will report how much a project will impact the county's natural and man-made environment. Decision-makers will take this into consideration when approving projects.

What Happens

Our county faces challenges in trying to balance increasing development with resource protection. That is one of the reasons why environmental review is so important. Environmental review helps prevent environmental damage which goes a long way in helping provide for a satisfying living environment for every person in San Luis Obispo County.



Paying Permit Fees in an Easier Way

By Chris Craig

During these tough economic times, we could all use some help with finances. Here are a few ways that paying permit fees has become a little easier:

- Permit application fees can now be paid online with a credit card (www.sloplanning.org).
- One free, automatic time extension applies to all tract map and parcel maps approved, but not expired, by July 15, 2008, but are set to expire before January 1, 2011 (Senate Bill 1185).
- Building permit and cell site applicants no longer have to wait around for their actual fees to be calculated. They can opt to pay a deposit up front. Permit fees will be deducted from the deposit and any remainder will be refunded when the project is finished. This saves you a trip if additional fees are required later on.
- Homeowners can move into their newly built homes before certain conditions, like landscaping, are met by signing a performance agreement. The agreement gives you time to complete needed work while enjoying your new home.

Your application fees are based on the operating cost of providing services. We monitor all expenses so your fees are kept to a minimum. We'll continue to look for ways to ease the planning and building process for you. If you have suggestions on fee-related services, please feel free to contact us at planningfinance@co.slo.ca.us

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Bringing Planning to You

By Holly Frank





Planning and Building services are available to you 24 hours-a-day at <http://www.sloplanning.org>.

You can save time and money by using these services instead of driving to our office. On-line services include:

- **Online Forms** – Submit comments to the Planning Commission for upcoming meetings, request a pre-application meeting, or comment on ordinances and plans being updated.
- **Fill-in and Saveable Construction Permit Form** – Fill-in information and edit at your convenience before submitting it to us. You'll be able to retain your submitted version for future reference. (you can save this form using Adobe Acrobat Reader versions 8 or 9)
- **Live Meeting Video** – Watch public meetings as they happen, or view archived meetings and agendas.
- **Automated Inspection Scheduling** – Schedule building inspections using our online scheduling system.
- **Building Permit Status Look-Up** – View the status of your building permit.
- **Parcel and Zoning Look-Up** – Research parcels and look up property zoning.
- **ePermits** – Apply for 7 different types of projects online, no need to come in to our office.
- **Pay Fees Online** – Pay land use, code enforcement, or building permit second installment fees online using your credit card.
- **Color-Coded Meeting Calendar** – View an easy-to-read calendar to find dates for upcoming public meetings.
- **Zoning and Maps** – View interactive maps with our Geographic Information System.

We're also adding new features to our website:

- **New Website Look** – User-friendly design and reorganization will make finding information on our site even easier.
- **Forms Library** – We've added a new listing of the forms we provide, grouped two ways: by type of form and alphabetically.
- **Enhanced Search Capability** – We've enhanced the search capability to help you find what you're looking for.

 <p>News</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ We Have a New Website! ▶ Additional Time for Issuance of a Construction Permit ▶ Update of the Conservation and Open Space Element ▶ Planning Commission eComments Form ▶ New Easy Fill-In Construction Permit 					
<p>Permits</p>  <p>Review types of permits, the application process, scheduling an inspection and download application forms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of Permits • Permitting Process • Inspections • Check Permit Status • Fees <p>Go to Permits</p>	<p>Land Planning</p>  <p>Learn about land use planning, land divisions, the land use permitting process, ordinances and environmental concerns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land Use • Land Division • Long Range Planning • Ordinances • Environmental Review <p>Go to Land Planning</p>	<p>Zoning & Maps</p>  <p>We provide several methods to view, interact, and download maps, geographic information, and data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive GIS Maps • Online Zoning Lookup • Land Use Maps • Map Image Download Center • GIS Data Download <p>Go to Zoning & Maps</p>			
<p>Quicklinks</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td> Grading and Drainage Housing & Economic Development Enforcement Environment & Natural Resources Land Conservation Strategic Growth </td> <td> Meetings, Agendas, Minutes Planning Commission Community-Specific Guidelines Community Advisory Councils Newsletter and Activity Report Archived News </td> <td> Staff Directory Frequently Asked Questions Contact Us Location, Hours, About Us Customer Satisfaction Survey Mission/Vision </td> </tr> </table>			Grading and Drainage Housing & Economic Development Enforcement Environment & Natural Resources Land Conservation Strategic Growth	Meetings, Agendas, Minutes Planning Commission Community-Specific Guidelines Community Advisory Councils Newsletter and Activity Report Archived News	Staff Directory Frequently Asked Questions Contact Us Location, Hours, About Us Customer Satisfaction Survey Mission/Vision
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HOUSING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Affordable Housing Is Coming to a Community Near You

By Dana Lilley

Over the past year, the County helped 52 local households find the housing they need by providing financing through State and Federal grants. The County funding also stimulated the local economy with more than \$3 million for local construction contractors and supplies during a serious economic recession.

The County set aside more funds for future projects in Cambria, Arroyo Grande, Grover Beach and Templeton. These projects will produce approximately 50 additional new affordable housing units.

People's Self-Help Housing Corporation (PSHHC) proposes to build 22 to 44 apartments in Cambria, using approximately \$1 million in Federal funds from the County. The wide range in project size reflects uncertainty regarding the amount of water that can be provided by the Cambria Community Services District.

Here is a photo of the site in its current vacant state:



The nonprofit Transition-Mental Health Associates (T-MHA) proposes to build five studio apartments in Arroyo Grande for its low and very low income clients. The County is providing \$200,000 for this project. According to Denise Rae of T-MHA, "The funky garage and the studio behind it are to be demolished and replaced with the five new studio units. The design of the new building will match the vintage look of the large house on the property."



Finally, using \$456,000 in funds from the County, Habitat for Humanity has begun work constructing four affordable homes in Grover Beach. The city is providing funds from its redevelopment agency to augment the County funds.

The County will also provide about \$1.2 million to help PSHHC purchase the 52-unit Rolling Hills Apartments in Templeton to ensure that these apartments stay affordable.

ENFORCEMENT SECTION

Safe, Healthy, and Livable Communities

By Art Trinidad

Code Enforcement, or "Resource Protection" as we are officially called, is a unit of the Planning and Building Department that deals primarily with resolving violations of land use, coastal land use and building ordinances. The Code Enforcement section also implements programs designed to protect public safety, protect the environment and promote safe neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Preservation. A major part of Code Enforcement is working with neighborhood groups, especially those organized as Neighborhood Watch programs, to eliminate blight and essentially make neighborhoods less attractive to the criminal element.

Statistics show that neat, clean neighborhoods show pride in ownership and are less likely to be potential crime targets. Our code enforcement officers proactively work in many communities and bring potential problems like stored cars or a property with junk in the yard to the owner's attention. Not only is the environment improved, but property values are maintained and enhanced.

Tenant Services. One of our major goals is to eliminate substandard housing. Most often, the victim of substandard housing is a tenant. We insist that all homes meet minimum standards for weather protection and safe electrical and plumbing. We often seek assistance from other agencies such as Environmental Health, the Building division and the local fire department.

We work hard to not eliminate the inventory of affordable rentals while at the same time ensuring public safety.

Environmental Protection. We do proactive enforcement on any illegal tree or protected plant taking as well as unpermitted grading and siltation into waterways. However, given the size of the county, this is a difficult task, and we are always asking the public to report potential violations. Most, if not all offenders, are referred to the District Attorney for prosecution.

If you have any questions or would like us to attend a neighborhood meeting or Neighborhood Watch meeting, please call us at (805)781-5705 or email us at atrinidade@co.slo.ca.us.



Planning for Tomorrow

By Mike Wulkan

The natural beauty, charming towns, and rural character of our communities make San Luis Obispo County a pretty special place to live and visit. But, these attributes don't happen by accident. The vision and guide for development is set by the County General Plan adopted by the Board of Supervisors. With a focus on being responsive to local needs and vision, the Community Planning Section of the Planning and Building Department prepares and maintains the General Plan and its elements (parts) for future development and sustainability.

Designing Communities

Community design and enhancement plans are prepared by Community Planners who help see that those plans are implemented. Recent plans include: the Countywide Design Guidelines, the award-winning Olde Towne Nipomo Design and Circulation Plan, Santa Margarita Design Plan, and West Tefft Corridor Design Plan.

Maintaining Resources

Maintaining resources and infrastructure are fundamental to Community Planners' jobs. To avoid future problems, critical resources and infrastructure such as water supplies and roads are tracked in the Re-

source Management System (RMS), and planners recommend timely actions.

Planning for the Future — *In Progress*

Planning is currently collaborating with other County departments to plan for and equitably fund much-needed infrastructure such as water supplies, roads and interchanges, transit facilities, and other necessary public facilities. In addition, we are working on several projects including revisions to the RMS and Growth Management Ordinance, and comprehensive updates and reorganizations to the following General Plan Elements:

The Conservation and Open Space Element (COSE):

The COSE covers a variety of conservation-related topics in one document. Its purpose is to protect water supplies and quality, biological resources such as habitats for plants and animals, cultural resources such as archaeological and historic sites, visual resources, and soils. The COSE is also intended to conserve energy, protect air quality, and encourage development that is compact and energy efficient. The County Planning Commission is now holding hearings on the draft COSE and is expected to forward its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors by Fall 2009.

The Land Use and Transportation Element: This element is a comprehensive plan for land use and transportation in the rural parts of the county. It will be shaped by housing, conservation and economic goals as well as the Strategic Growth policies of compact, efficient development and protection of rural areas. It will reorganize and consolidate portions of the County Land Use Element and Land Use Ordinance for both inland and coastal areas. Starting at the beginning of 2010, the plan will involve an extensive public outreach effort. The final plan is expected to be completed by the end of 2011.

The plans, reports and drafts can be viewed at <http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/planning>.



BUILDING DIVISION

Protecting and Improving Our Water Quality

By Elizabeth Szwabowski

Construction sites can generate up to 1,000 times more sediment than a natural area which impacts the amount of sediment going into our streams, lakes and oceans. Removing top soil to prepare for a building, road or parking lot or pouring concrete can alter natural water cycles as well as release pollutants into our waterways.

Prior to the County issuing a building or grading permit for projects disturbing one acre or more, Federal law mandates that a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) must be obtained from the State Water Resources Control Board (swrcb.ca.gov). Contacting your Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) (549-3147) first can help you through this process. County Building staff will verify NPDES permits and SWPPP, review erosion and sediment plans, and work with RWQCB to inspect construction sites.

If your building permit requires NPDES and SWPPP, here are a few helpful tips to help you through the process:

- Prior to a building or grading permit being issued, applicants need to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) and pay a fee to the State Water Board. Generally, after 10 working days, the State Water Board will issue an NPDES permit.
- The NPDES permit is a letter from the State Water Board assigning a Waste Discharge Identification (WDID) number. The County Building Division will ask you for verification of the WDID# prior to the grading permit being issued.
- Before starting work, the applicant prepares and implements their Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).
- Keep a signed copy of your SWPPP on site and update it regularly.
- Implement all parts of your SWPPP throughout the project.
- Properly train all involved contractors on the requirements.
- Correctly install and maintain Best Management Practices (BMP's).
- Perform inspections before and after each rain storm and correct problems as soon as possible, generally within 48 hours.
- Maintain complete records of all SWPPP activities.
- Never discharge muddy water or other pollutants from the site.

Meet the Staff — Warren Hoag

Every quarter, a different staff member will be featured.



"Hello, I'm Warren Hoag of the Department of Planning and Building." That's how I start my comments at Board of Supervisors and Planning Commission meetings. I'm the Division Manager for Current Planning, and I attend those meetings

with my staff to make recommendations on development proposals.

The Current Planning Division is a great team of planners and administrative staff who process development projects, provides support to our decision-making boards and maintain public planning records. We review projects to ensure that they follow adopted plans and ordinances and are a good fit within our communities.

I've been with the department for 32 years, and I've had a wide variety of assignments. I worked with the team that developed the original Land Use Element and Land Use Ordinance that is still the backbone of our county's planning system today. After that, I became the Development Review supervisor and worked on large scale projects such as the San Luis Bay Estates Master Plan and the ARCO Solar Facility.

I was promoted to Principal Planner in 1986 and became the manager of the Long Range Planning Division. While I was in that division, updates of the countywide Noise and Safety Elements were completed and area plan updates for South County, San Luis Obispo and El Pomar/Estrella were adopted. The Safety Element update won outstanding planning awards from the American Planning Association. I became the Current Planning Division Manager in 2002, and I serve on the Agricultural Preserve Review Committee, FireSafe Council Board of Directors and the Emergency Operations Center

team. I've been a member of the American Institute of Certified Planners since 1987.

On the personal side, I'm proud to be a fourth generation Californian. I was born on New Year's Day, 1949, in Berkeley and I was raised in Whittier. I went to college at Cal State Fullerton, UC Santa Barbara and Fresno State. I lived in Turlock for a couple of years after I graduated and was a quality control technician for a disposable diaper factory (no, it's not what you think). After that, I got into the planning profession by doing internships with the City of Modesto and Fresno County. I came to this area in 1975 and worked as a city planner for Grover Beach for two years before I went to work for the County.

I live in Arroyo Grande, and I have been a volunteer on the city Architectural Review Committee since 1993, serving much of that time as chairman. I've been married to Kathryn for 36 years, and we have two grown children and five (!) cats. I have always had a rock n' roll heart, with blues, folk, bluegrass and jazz thrown in for good measure. I enjoy going to concerts and camping with my wife at music festivals in our small trailer. I appreciate good wine, especially our local product.

It's been a long, strange trip, but I've really enjoyed the ride. Adios!



Look at all of the food collected at the Planning and Building Department's first annual food drive. We did a really good job collecting food for the Food Bank for those who are less fortunate. It will all go to local families in need. Overall, the Food Bank collected over \$100,000 and received enough to fill their shelves for the months ahead. We hope to make the Food Drive an annual event leading up to Hunger Awareness Day, which is always in June. Thanks to everyone who donated to the food drive.

For information on how you can donate, contact the Food Bank at 238-4664 or www.slofoodbank.org.



Planning and Building
County Gov. Center
San Luis Obispo, CA
93408

Phone:
(805) 781-5600
Email:
Planningnetwork
@co.slo.ca.us



Upcoming Events...

September 10th & 24th—Planning Commission Conservation and Open Space Element hearings

September 13-16—APA Conference, Lake Tahoe

October 8—Planning Commission Conservation and Open Space hearings

Newsletter brought
to you by the
Communications
Team of the
Department of
Planning and
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Please submit ideas for
the next issue to
Jennifer Jimenez
jjimenez@co.slo.ca.us

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message to
Planningnetwork
@co.slo.ca.us with
“newsletter” in the
subject line.*

GUEST CORNER

“Nothing worthwhile comes easy,” I warn students on the first day of class in the graduate level Project Management course I teach as part of the Industrial Engineering program at Cal Poly.

Following Cal Poly’s learn-by-doing philosophy, the course covers the basic issues and tools of managing projects and provides the opportunity for a real-world application. Students are assigned a service project leading to a journey filled with trials and triumphs far grander than they can imagine. This journey, known as the PolyHouse project, takes place each spring with the introduction of a community service house remodel project limited to six weeks of planning and two weekends of execution for a physically disabled, financially disadvantaged family or individual. The mission is to improve the quality of their lives. The remodel is restricted by a budget (to be fundraised), tool and equipment resources (to be donated or borrowed), and human resources (limited to the students and any volunteers they can recruit).

As a result of participation in this project, students witness the impact they can have on society. It helps students understand the qualities of success and the importance of showing initiative and integrity. Equally important is the rare personal satisfaction that comes from helping others. Finally they learn the value of a committed

PolyHouse Project

By Roya Javadpour

team and gain confidence to lead, take risks and the courage to dream, realizing that nothing worthwhile comes easily.

The support of SLO County Planning and Building has been invaluable and instrumental in the success of our PolyHouse projects. My sincere gratitude to all that help us make this happen and for the impact your support has on the educational experience. I THANK YOU.



For more information on the PolyHouse project please visit:

<http://www.polyhouse.org>

Roya Javadpour Ph.D., is a professor in the Industrial and Manufacturing Engineering Department at Cal Poly. She founded the PolyHouse project in 2004 and is recipient of the Cal Poly President's Service Award and was named one of the San Luis Obispo Tribune's "Top 20 under 40" in recognition of her service work.

Mapping at Your Fingertips

*By John Kelly
GIS Section*

You can quickly view layers of information on a single map using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. View a collection of existing GIS maps or create your own using our interactive GIS website at sloplanning-maps.org. For example, using GIS, you can quickly create a risk assessment map by combining flood hazards, fire hazards, earthquake fault zones and landslide risk layers, together with property lines, to better illustrate the extent and concentration of hazardous areas that affect a property.

GIS is used in numerous fields including regional and community planning, real estate, public health, crime mapping, national defense, sustainable development, natural resources, landscape architecture, archaeology, transportation and logistics.

The Geographic Technology Section of the Planning and Building Department is continuing to work diligently to provide the public and all County staff with accurate data, maps, and analyses. In addition, we're working with staff from other departments to advance an enterprise GIS system for the betterment of San Luis Obispo County.